



MMA Help Desk  
New Medicare Advantage and  
Prescription Drug Plan

Connectivity and Access Configuration Process

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# 1 Introduction

All Part C/D Plans participating in the Medicare Part D Program are required to complete a number of setup tasks in order to be properly authorized and accurately configured to transmit to and receive data from CMS. This document is intended to assist Plans with this process. There are multiple options for connectivity; therefore, not all steps described in this document will apply to all Plans. In addition, Plans that have previously established connectivity for MMA programs may be able to skip some steps. In general, however, all Plans with new contracts should review all steps to determine those that apply. Should a Plan choose to use a third party to exchange data with CMS, it is the Plan's responsibility to ensure that the third party entity has all required information to perform the tasks described.

This document assumes that the Plan has reviewed information regarding the connectivity options and requirements available to them for exchanging data with CMS. If not, Plans should review the *Data Exchange Preparation and Procedures* (DEPP) document on the MMAHelp website ([www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp)) before proceeding.

This guide is focused primarily on assisting Plans in establishing data exchange capabilities with CMS; however, participation in the Medicare program as a Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug Plan requires Plans to exchange data with other entities such as Palmetto GBA and GHI. Where applicable, this guide provides information on setup requirements within the CMS environment for the exchange of data with these other entities. The following table depicts the connectivity options and data destination for each data type.

	T1/Connect:Direct	Gentran
Enrollment /4RX/BEQ	CMS	CMS
ECRS (Other Health Insurance)	GHI	CMS Enterprise File Transfer (Gentran) to GHI
PDE (Prescription Drug Events)	Palmetto	CMS Enterprise File Transfer (Gentran) to Palmetto
RAPS (Risk Adjustment Data)	Palmetto	CMS Enterprise File Transfer (Gentran) to Palmetto

This document is divided into major categories of activities to assist the Plan in focusing the appropriate resources on their required tasks. These categories include:

- Getting Started
- Security and Access
- Connectivity – Set-up
- Connectivity - Testing
- Application Testing

For each category, this guide attempts to define the resources required to complete the tasks and to explain any dependencies between tasks and categories.

## 1.1 Other Documentation/Support

While this document provides an overview of each of the steps involved in the process, more detailed documentation and various other information resources are available to Plans on the MMAHelp website – [www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp). These include the following:

### **Forms:**

Connect:Direct SPOE ID Request form - <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/CDSPOE.pdf>

Connect:Direct Setup form- <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/CDSetupForm.pdf>

CMS Connectivity form – attached to this document as Appendix B - [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAHelp/downloads/CMS\\_Connectivity.pdf](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAHelp/downloads/CMS_Connectivity.pdf)

### **Documents:**

Data Exchange Preparation Procedures (DEPP) - <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/DEPP.pdf>

Individuals Access to CMS Computer Systems (IACS) User Guide - <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAHelp/Downloads/IACSUserGuideV3.pdf>

Plan Communication Users Guide (PCUG) and Appendices - <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/PCUG.pdf>  
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/PCUGAppendices.pdf>

External Point of Contact (EPOC) Letter submission requirements - [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/EPOC\\_Letter\\_050206.pdf](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp/downloads/EPOC_Letter_050206.pdf)

Plan Application Testing Guide – under development; this will be located on the MMAHelp website in the near future.

### **Additional Assistance:**

If Plans encounter problems or questions at any point in this process, the MMAHelp Desk is available for assistance and can be reached at 1-800-927-8069 or via email at [mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov).

In addition, for assistance with PDE/RAPS data submission or processing, Plans can contact the Customer Service and Support Center, CSSC (PDE/RAPS) Help Desk – [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAHelp/09\\_HelpfulLinks.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MMAHelp/09_HelpfulLinks.asp#TopOfPage)

For Plan convenience, Appendix A contains a checklist of activities that Plans may use as a tool to track their progress through the completion of all required tasks.

## **2 Getting Started**

### **2.1 Obtain a Contract Number from CMS/HPMS**

All new Plans participating in Part C/D must have received a contract number from CMS/HPMS before they can begin. Contract numbers identify your organization and Part D offering. This identifier is five digits long, typically beginning with an alphabetic character followed by four numbers.

### **2.2 Contact the MMAHelp Desk to Open a Progress Tracking Ticket**

The MMAHelp Desk will assist you through the connectivity setup and testing processes. Plans must call the MMAHelp Desk to obtain a tracking ticket number in order to document the progress on these activities. One ticket can be used to track the progress on multiple contract numbers. Plans should be prepared to provide this tracking ticket number (or numbers) to expedite assistance when contacting MMAHelp. Please contact the MMAHelp Desk at 1-800-927-8069 or via email at [mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov).

## 2.3 Complete Connectivity Paperwork

Attached to this document, in Appendix B, is the “CMS Connectivity for MA/MA-PD/PDP Organizations” form, which collects information on how data will be transmitted/received between CMS and the Plan.

CMS requires a hardcopy of this form, with wet signature, to be filed with the MMAHelp Desk for all contract numbers before any files will be exchanged. Only one form is required if all new contract numbers will use the same data exchange mechanism (i.e., Gentran, Connect:Direct or third party); otherwise separate forms per transfer mechanism are required. **Note:** this form is also the vehicle for Plans to communicate data routing changes, as needed, in the future.

For Plans that have previously established connectivity to CMS for Part D data exchanges and do not wish to change that routing for their new contracts, this form still must be completed and should reference their current configuration. These Plans do not have to complete the activities described in Sections 4 and 5 of this document – Connectivity Set-up and Testing.

**Note:** The CMS Connectivity for MA/MA-PD/PDP Organizations form must be completed and submitted for all new contract numbers prior to the User registration steps described in this document in Section 3 – Security and Access.

## 2.4 Complete T1/Connect:Direct Forms

Plans that wish to exchange data with CMS via a T1 line and Connect:Direct software (either from a mainframe or server) must complete two additional forms. These forms are:

- CMS Connect:Direct form - captures technical configuration information such as TCP/IP address, high level qualifier/directory information etc.
- CMS SPOE ID Request form – captures information about the entity seeking this connectivity to CMS so that a Secure Point of Entry Identification (SPOE ID) number can be provided to the entity.

Both of these forms are located for download on the MMAHelp website and contain information on where the form should be sent, once completed. Refer to Section 1.1 for the associated links for these documents.

**Note:** Establishing a new T1 connection and the associated access can take six to eight weeks to order, schedule, and install. Plans need to make this a priority if this is the selected exchange mechanism.

# 3 Security and Access

In order to gain access to CMS’ MMA Systems, a Plan’s resources must register in the Individuals Authorized Access to CMS Computer Service (IACS) System. This system supports three Plan user roles; at a minimum the Plan must have at least one External Point of Contact (EPOC)/User Approver and one User/Submitter registered in order for data exchange processes to work:

- Approver/EPOC – Required - External Point of Contact; responsible for approving end users requesting access to CMS systems on behalf of a Plan. This person (or persons) cannot be an end user of CMS systems and must have the authority in the Plan’s organization to authorize user access.
- User/Submitter – Required – Resource(s) responsible for the transmission/receipt of data to and from CMS via Connect:Direct or Gentran. These can be resources from a third party entity, assuming Plan EPOC approval. These users also have access to the MARx and MBD User Interfaces.
- User/Representative – This role provides access to User Interfaces; it is not required for data exchange, but would be required for analysis and support of business processes. These can be resources from a third party entity, assuming Plan EPOC approval.

Upon successful registration, a user will be given a seven-character User ID and password. For more information on how to register in this system, please see the IACS User Guide on the MMAHelp website.

The following steps must be completed in the defined order for the registration process to proceed smoothly.

### 3.1 Submit EPOC Designation Letter to CMS

Before a Plan can have any resources register in IACS, they must submit an EPOC Designation Letter, on company letterhead, as is described on the MMAHelp website (see Section 1.1 for a link to the document). This letter will be used by CMS resources to validate the IACS registration information of the EPOC. Failure to submit accurate information in this letter will result in no, or delayed, access for all Plan users. Plans are encouraged to identify two or three EPOCs, depending on the size of the organization and number of eventual users. This activity should be completed as soon as a contract number is obtained from HPMS.

**Note:** All Plans must submit a letter identifying the EPOCs for each newly assigned contract number even if there is a letter already on file for existing contracts.

### 3.2 Register EPOC in IACS

**NOTE** – Registration cannot occur until the 2007 contract numbers are added to the IACS database. MMAHelp will send notification to Plans when this occurs.

Once the EPOC designation letter has been sent to CMS, EPOCs may register for the new contract numbers in the IACS system (applications.cms.hhs.gov). New EPOCs will select the ‘Self Registration’ link to complete their registration; existing EPOCs will select the ‘Registered User Login’ and modify their registrations to add the new contract numbers.

EPOCs will receive email notification when the registration has been approved by CMS. This email will also contain the User ID and initial password for new users. New users must immediately change their initial password and answer at least four challenge questions in IACS.

### 3.3 Register User/Submitters and User/Representatives – Enrollment, 4RX, BEQ, ECRS

Once notified that his/her EPOC registration for a contract has been approved by CMS, the EPOC can notify the Plan submitters and representatives that they may proceed with their registration. As with the EPOCs, new users will select the ‘Self Registration’ link to completion their registration; existing users will select the ‘Registered User Login’ and modify their registration to add the new contract numbers.

Users will receive email notification when the registration has been approved by the EPOC and setup is complete at CMS. This email will also contain the User ID and initial password for new users. New users must immediately change their initial password and answer challenge questions in IACS.

For Plans that have indicated on their CMS Connectivity form that they will be using the Gentran option for exchanging data with CMS, this step will also result in the Gentran mailbox creation for their contract number(s). Along with using the mailbox to send/receive enrollment, 4RX and BEQ data, Plans must also use this mailbox to send ECRS (other Health Insurance) data to GHI.

**Note:** Plans cannot perform the Section 5 - Connectivity Testing step without having established at least one User/Submitter in IACS for their new contract number(s).

### 3.4 Register User/Submitters – PDE/RAPS

All Plans that will exchange Prescription Drug Event (PDE) and/or Risk Adjustment (RAPS) data with Palmetto must contact the Customer Service and Support Center (CSSC) at Palmetto to complete additional configuration steps.



For Plans that will use Gentran to send Prescription Drug Event (PDE) and Risk Adjustment (RAPS) data to Palmetto via CMS, an additional IACS registration step is required to establish the Gentran mailbox and the access to it. Submitters will need to follow the IACS User Guide to complete registration for PDE and/or RAPS (using applications.cms.hhs.gov). Registration for this access can be done at the same time as general registration, or submitters can modify their registration at a later date to add that access.

Users will receive email notification when the registration has been approved by the EPOC and setup is complete at CMS. This step will also result in the Gentran mailbox creation for the contract number and system designation (e.g., H1234PDE or H1234RAPS).

## **4 Connectivity – Set Up**

Connectivity options for Plans are described in detail in the *Data Exchange Preparation Procedures* (DEPP) document. Plans should have reviewed their options and submitted a CMS Connectivity form (see Section 1) as they prepare for this step.

NOTE: Plans with existing connectivity (Gentran or T1/C:D) may skip this step and the next and proceed to Section 6 – Application Testing.

### **4.1 Set up T1/Connect:Direct to CMS**

Plans selecting the T1/C:D option for data transfer must work with AT&T or an AT&T reseller to establish connectivity to CMS via the AT&T Global Network System (AGNS). Please note that it can take six to eight weeks or longer to establish a new connection. Prior to testing with CMS, Plans are responsible for verifying that they can access AGNS and ‘see’ CMS. They must also ensure that the high-level qualifier and or security designations identified by the Plan on the Connect:Direct form are accessible to CMS.

Plans must obtain the Connect:Direct software from Sterling Commerce and complete the installation and configuration for their site. Sterling can provide consultation on these activities as required.

Finally, plans must also have completed the forms described in Section 2.4 above.

Once these prerequisite steps have been completed, the Plan should contact the MMAHelp Desk to schedule a connectivity testing timeframe.

### **4.2 Set Up Gentran Access**

Plans selecting the Gentran option for data transfer have two options for accessing the mailbox system – HTTPS or SFTP. Plans may choose to use either or both without notifying CMS of their selection. Plans may begin this setup at any time, however, the submitter will not be able to successfully access the Plan mailbox(es) until registration in IACS is complete. The CMS Connectivity form must also be complete for the Data Exchange to occur between the Plan and CMS (Section 2.4).

The Plan should follow the procedures outlined in the DEPP to install and configure access to the Gentran mailbox system. This includes installing the software (if using SFTP) and opening the required firewalls. CMS recommends using Sterling Commerce’s Connect:Enterprise SFTP software if that option is selected.

## **5 Connectivity – Testing**

### **5.1 Test T1/Connect:Direct to CMS**

The MMAHelp Desk will schedule a conference call with all appropriate CMS resources in order to conduct a connectivity test; the Plan must ensure that they have the appropriate telecommunications and technical resources available from their organization.

Connectivity testing will ensure that all firewalls/ports are open and accessible on both sides of the established connection. This test will exercise the ability of both entities (the Plan and CMS) to send and receive data. The test is not application-specific. For further information on C:D job setup, please reference the Plan Communications User Guide (PCUG), section 2.

Once a successful test is completed, the Plan can move into the Application Testing phase.

## **5.2 Test Gentran**

Once properly configured, Plans using Gentran should access the mailbox that has been established at CMS for them (assuming a submitter has completed IACS registration). Plans must submit a screen shot, in jpeg format (.jpg) of their successful access to their Gentran mailbox to the MMAHelp Desk. It is not necessary to provide a screen shot for all mailboxes, if multiple mailboxes are established.

Once a successful test is completed, the Plan can move into the Application Testing phase.

## **6 Application Testing**

The application testing process is described in the CMS-Plans MMA Testing Plan which is being updated as of April 2006. This document will be available to Plans on the MMA Help web site as soon as it becomes available.

## Appendix A. Plan Connectivity Checklist

Getting Started				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or N/A	#	Task	Checkpoint	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	Obtain a Contract Number from CMS/HPMS	Once completed, Task #5 may be initiated.	Contract #:
<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	Open a progress tracking ticket with the MMAHelp Desk		Ticket #:
<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	Complete connectivity paperwork		
	4.	Complete T1/Connect:Direct Forms:	Must be started at least 6 weeks prior to target connectivity testing date.	
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		1. CMS Connect:Direct form		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		2. CMS SPOE ID Request form		
Security and Access				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or N/A	#	Task	Checkpoint	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.	Submit EPOC Designation Letter to CMS	After completion of Task #1.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6.	EPOC registered in IACS	After completion of Task #5.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	7.	EPOC approval received from CMS		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8.	User/Submitter(s) registered in IACS for Enrollment, 4RX, and BEQ (ECRS)	After EPOC registration is complete.	
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A	9.	User/Representative(s) registered in IACS for Enrollment, 4RX, and BEQ (ECRS)	After EPOC registration is complete.	
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A	10.	User/Submitter(s) registered in IACS for PDE/RAPS	Gentran Submitters only. May be completed the same time as Task #8 or at a later date.	
Connectivity – SetUp				
Note: Plans perform either Task #11 or Task #12.				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or N/A	#	Task	Checkpoint	Notes
	11.	Each item listed in this Task is <b>required</b> by Plans submitting data via Connect:Direct.	Must be started at least 6 weeks prior to target connectivity testing date.	
		Set up T1/Connect:Direct to CMS:		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		1. Contact AT&T or an AT&T reseller to establish connectivity to CMS via AGNS.		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		2. Verify access to CMS via AGNS		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		3. High-level qualifier and/or security designations verified as accessible to CMS.		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		4. Obtain Connect:Direct Software from Sterling Commerce.		

<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		5. Complete installation and configuration of Connect:Direct Software.		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		6. Submitter successfully registered in IACS (see Task #8).		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		7. Obtain SPOE ID from CMS (see Task #4.2).		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		6. Contact MMAHelp Desk to schedule connectivity testing timeframe.		
	12.	Each item listed in this Task is <b>required</b> by Plans submitting data via Gentran.  Set up Gentran access:		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		1. Submitter successfully registered in IACS (see Task #8).		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		2. Obtain and install SFTP Software (if not using HTTPS)		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		3. Open required firewalls/ports: SFTP Port: 10022 HTTPS Port: 3443		

#### Connectivity – Testing

**Note: Plans perform either Task #13 or Task #14. Plans submitting PDE/RAPS data must also perform Task #15.**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or N/A	#	Task	Checkpoint	Notes
	13.	Each item listed in this Task is <b>required</b> by Plans submitting data via Connect:Direct.  Test T1/Connect:Direct to CMS:		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		1. Appropriate telecommunications and technical resources participate in conference call with appropriate CMS Resources (initiated by MMAHelp Desk).		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		2. Successfully transfer data <b>to</b> CMS		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		3. Successfully receive data <b>from</b> CMS		
	14.	Each item listed in this Task is <b>required</b> by Plans submitting data via Gentran.  Test Gentran:	Task #'s 8 and/or 10 must be completed successfully before this task can be completed.	
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		1. Mailbox(s) established at CMS is accessible		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		2. Screenshot of successful access to 1 Gentran mailbox e-mailed to the MMAHelp Desk.		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A		3. Send test file to Gentran mailbox		
<input type="checkbox"/> or N/A	15.	Contact CSSC Help Desk for assistance with Connectivity Testing of PDE/RAPS data submission.		

## Appendix B. CMS Connectivity for MA/PDP/MA-PD Organizations

### CMS Connectivity for MA/PDP/MA-PD and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Organizations

Enrollment – BEQ – 4RX – ECRS

PDE – RAPS

Type of Request:

☐ New   ☐ Change   Proposed Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_   Current Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Technical Contact Information

Organization Name:

Name:

Position:

Phone:

Email:

#### II. Plan Connectivity

Enrollment Submission Method (*choose one*):

☐ T1 Connect:Direct   ☐ Gentran   ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Name\* (\* complete Section III) \_\_\_\_\_

*If using an existing MMA T1 configuration, please provide CMS SPOE ID (Secure Point of Entry) \_\_\_\_\_*

PDE Submission Method (*choose one*):

☐ T1 C:D/FTP to Palmetto   ☐ Gentran   ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party   ☐ None

RAPS Submission Method (*choose one*):

☐ T1 C:D/FTP to Palmetto   ☐ Gentran   ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party   ☐ None

#### III. Enrollment Third Party Connectivity

Connectivity Method: (*choose one*):

☐ T1 Connect:Direct   ☐ Gentran

Third Party Technical Contact Information

Name:

Position:

Phone:

Email:

**IV. Contract Information** (please list all affected contract numbers or attach a spreadsheet)

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**V. Existing Data Routing Configuration:**


Enrollment: ☐ T1 Connect:Direct ☐ Gentran ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party (name) (completed by Plans requesting routing changes only) \_\_\_\_\_

PDE: ☐ T1 C:D/FTP to Palmetto ☐ Gentran ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party

RAPS: ☐ T1 C:D/FTP to Palmetto ☐ Gentran ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Party

**Organization Representative**

(Print Name): \_\_\_\_\_


 Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Plan EPOC Approver**

(Print Name): \_\_\_\_\_

 Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Who should complete this form?**

MMA organizations submitting enrollment, BEQ, 4RX, ECRS, PDE and/or RAPS data to CMS. This form is intended to be used by plans initially setting up data exchange processes with CMS as well as those that wish to change their current configuration. In all cases, Plans using third party entities to transfer data to/from CMS are responsible for providing the third party information.

**What is this form used for?**

Accurate routing of transactions to and from CMS requires the completion of this form that specifies the methodology used by your organization to exchange Enrollment, PDE and Risk/Encounter Data. Identification of third party relationships with MMA plans is necessary for proper routing. Please complete the sections appropriate to your organization so setup or changes to routing can occur.

**What to do with this form?**

After the information has been verified and/or corrected, obtain the appropriate signature, and fax the completed letter to the MMA Help Desk, at 410-832-8333. A second, signed, hardcopy version (i.e., wet signature) must be filed with the Help Desk, and sent via an overnight service. Use the following address:

MMA Help Desk  
Attn: Terry Brogan  
1 West Pennsylvania Ave. Suite 700  
Towson, MD 21204

**Where to go for further assistance?**

For advice on connectivity options, please refer to the Data Exchange Preparation Procedures document available at [www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mmahelp). If you have any questions or concerns about this form, please contact the MMA Help Desk at [mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:mmahelp@cms.hhs.gov) or 1-800-927-8069.